



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
April 18, 2008

For More Information, Contact:  
Abbi Pierce  
Division of Disease Control  
North Dakota Department of Health  
Phone: 701.328.2378  
E-mail: [apierce@nd.gov](mailto:apierce@nd.gov)

### **North Dakota Observes National Infant Immunization Week**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is joining private and public health professionals across the country in observing National Infant Immunization Week April 19 through 25, 2008. The theme of the event, which focuses on the importance of immunizing babies, is *Love them. Protect them. Immunize them.*

Although outstanding progress has been made in immunizing children – with immunization rates at the highest level ever recorded for most vaccines – there is still much work to be done, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

“Each year, more than 8,500 children are born in North Dakota, and each is in need of protection from serious diseases,” Dwelle said. “Unfortunately, about 20 percent of North Dakota children ages 19 months to 35 months are not up-to-date for recommended vaccines.”

Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to many serious illnesses and diseases. Disease-causing viruses and bacteria still are circulating, and North Dakota children still are being infected by vaccine-preventable diseases. For example, pertussis (also known as whooping cough) is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable disease that increasingly has been reported in North Dakota. This was especially evident in 2004, when 757 cases of pertussis were reported in the state.

“Many of today’s parents have never seen the types of disease that modern immunizations prevent,” Dwelle said. “However, these illnesses are serious and still pose a threat. For example, hospitalizations and complications of pertussis are most common among infants age 6 months and younger.”

-- more --

---

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200  
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: [health@nd.gov](mailto:health@nd.gov)

Visit the health department home page at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov).

To combat vaccine-preventable diseases, North Dakota requires that children receive certain vaccines. This year, North Dakota implemented new early childhood and day-care requirements, including age-appropriate vaccinations to prevent hepatitis A, pneumococcal, and rotavirus.

“I encourage parents to talk with their children’s health-care provider and check to make sure their children’s immunizations are up-to-date,” Dwelle said. “Immunizations are the best way for parents to protect the health of their children for a lifetime.”

For more information about National Infant Immunization Week or to learn where to get immunizations for your children, contact Abbi Pierce, Immunization Surveillance coordinator, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180, or visit [www.ndhealth.gov/immunize](http://www.ndhealth.gov/immunize).

-- 30 --

*Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at [www.nddohpressroom.gov](http://www.nddohpressroom.gov).*